



2010 SUMMIT ON HEALTH, NUTRITION AND OBESITY: ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

GOVERNOR'S FITNESS CHALLENGE: EXPAND THE CHALLENGE TO 1 MILLION PARTICIPANTS IN 2010

"I want to take what was discussed at the Summit and turn our state goals into action that will attack obesity on every level and create a healthy foundation for California's future." (Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, 2010 Summit On Health, Nutrition And Obesity, 2/24/10)

Action:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will work with the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Chairman Jake Steinfeld to expand the Governor's Fitness Challenge to 1 million participants in 2010.

California Context:

National research indicates that less than 50 percent of children aged 9-11 achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and 14 percent engage in fewer than 30 minutes of physical activity daily. For adolescents, the proportion of Latinos and African-Americans getting no physical activity is two to three times higher than white teens, and teenagers from low-income families are less active than those who are more affluent.

Recognizing the importance of physical activity in schools, Governor Schwarzenegger instituted the Fitness Challenge Competition in 2006, encouraging participants to be active 30-60 minutes a day at least three days a week for a month. In its first year, the challenge attracted 10,000 students and the program has continued to grow with more than 330,000 students participating in the last year, from over 1,200 California schools. The program is absolutely free for schools, and thanks to corporate and foundation support, more than \$400,000 worth of physical activity equipment is awarded to winning schools every year.

Participation in the Fitness Challenge is a good way to engage students in moderate to vigorous physical activity, which has been shown in a number of studies to not only improve health but also reduce stress, improve concentration and cognitive function, and even increase test scores. Results from Stanislaus County's participation in the challenge seem to support these findings. County Superintendent of Education Tom Changnon encouraged all Stanislaus schools to participate in the Governor's Challenge last year. More than 80,000 Stanislaus County students actually took the Governor's Challenge, recording more than a million days of physical activity. And last year when students took the California Standards Tests, the average increase in scores of students from the most physically active Stanislaus County schools was 8 percent compared to 4.5 percent for the County as a whole and 3 percent for the state.

Success Stories:

Schools across the state have found new ways of promoting physical activity while participating for free in the challenge, even winning cash prizes. Hickman Elementary School in Stanislaus County participated in the Fitness Challenge and implemented innovative programs to engage students in physical activity throughout the school day. As a result, Hickman Elementary was awarded a 2009 Regional Award and \$6,000. At Hazel Strauch Elementary School in Sacramento County, every student participated in the challenge and the school ultimately received the 2008 Governor's Fitness Challenge Award for their success, winning a new, state-of-the-art high-tech fitness center complete with virtual mountain biking, exercise equipment, and a martial arts arena.